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# Walt Stanchfield 06

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Notes from Walt Stanchfield's Disney Drawing Classes

**“Tennis, Angles, and Essences”**

**by Walt Stanchfield**

## Tennis, Angles, and Essences

### TENNIS, ANGLES, AND ESSENCES

One thing is for sure, to acquire a certain degree of skill or expertise in any undertaking the basics must be studied and conquered. Drawing, animation specifically, is no exception. Once the basic rules and principles are thoroughly ingrained, they can be applied to all the variations of problems that will confront us--and confront us they will.

The game of tennis has a few basics that when once learned are applicable throughout the game. For instance once you learn what a "forehand drive" is, you soon realize that that shot doesn't cover just one tiny area of the total. It covers any ball that comes to your right side (if you're right handed), anywhere from the ankles up to around head height, providing it bounces once on the court before it gets to you. Beginners who are not yet aware of this as a category of shot will be confused, because it comes at them anywhere from the center of the body to way beyond their reach, and as I mentioned, from the ankle to head height. It's like being "splayed" by a machine gun of tennis balls. You may find a waist shot at arms length fairly easy to handle, but these things are coming at you like swallows entering their nesting place at sundown.

So you study and learn this one stroke, the "forehand drive" which requires, more or less, one particular "principle" of stroking. Just knowing that much makes it easier to adjust to the variety of heights and distances and speeds of balls, so you can adapt your body movements, weight distribution, speed of racket, footwork, etc. Anything over the head merges into the area of an "overhead" shot--that requires a technique of its own. Anything that bounces just before you hit it is a "half volley" shot that has its own rules for handling. The forehand drive is just one of many shots a tennis player should have in his arsenal of shots.

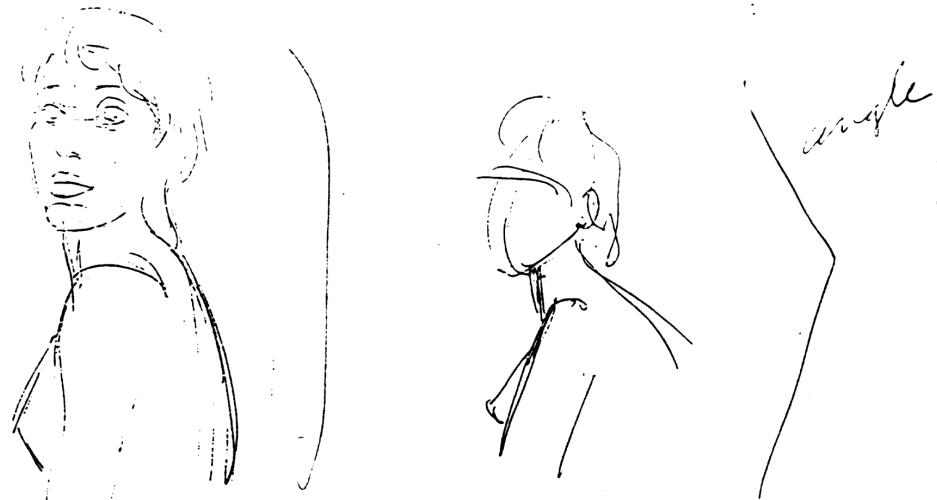
I didn't mean to bore you, but I thought it might illustrate the fact that knowing a particular problem so you can deal with it on its own terms makes sense. It takes all the mystery and the confusion out of it. It allows one to isolate a problem and to work on it alone and by repetitive practice, "groove" it to perfection, and to learn it so well that it becomes second nature--not that you won't have to think anymore, but that thinking about it will not cause you to lose your main trend of thought, which of course in animation is acting out your character part on paper.

The use of those rules of perspective I mention so often, may be likened to shots in tennis. To avoid belaboring those rules too much, let's use angles as an illustration of a "stroke" in our arsenal of shots. Every gesture or pose is loaded with angles, but if they are not-recognized as potential point winners,' we might just gloss over them. I don't want you to gloss over that word gloss either--it means superficial quality or show--a deceptive outward appearance--to make an error, etc., seem right or trivial. If we gloss over enough of those kinds of drawing "strokes", we'll end up with a "love game", in other words a nothing drawing.

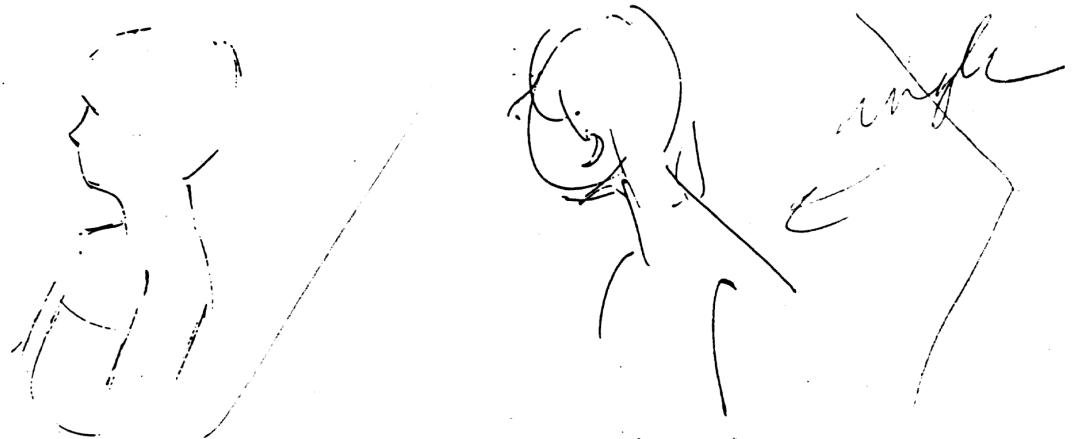
Back to angles. If you want to make a strong statement, and even subtle poses and actions can be strong statements, pay special attention to angles. Especially if you work roughly, then "clean" your drawings up later. (after the initial spurt of enthusiasm and clarity of vision has left you). Then later a cleanup person will work on it, who never had your enthusiasm or clarity of vision, and perhaps soften the angles just a little more. Your accolades will be soft too, for it is the strong statements that get the oohs and ahs. Don't confuse angles with angularity. Some of the most graceful people are put together with 45 degree angles. Watch them--they seem to have studied how to play one angle off another to create those tantalizing poses. Sometimes the changes of angles of cheek against flock, or hand against cheek are so subtle they are felt rather than seen, If you are just looking they are seductive--if you are drawing, they suddenly become almost invisible--difficult to see and capture. That's why sometimes you have to draw not what you see but what you know is there or what you feel is there.

## Tennis, Angles, and Essences

Last week while making suggestions on some of your drawings I concentrated on angles. Sometimes the angles were just barely discernible on the model and so needed special attention to find. Once found they needed accenting to make sure they would still be subtle, but at the same time a strong statement.

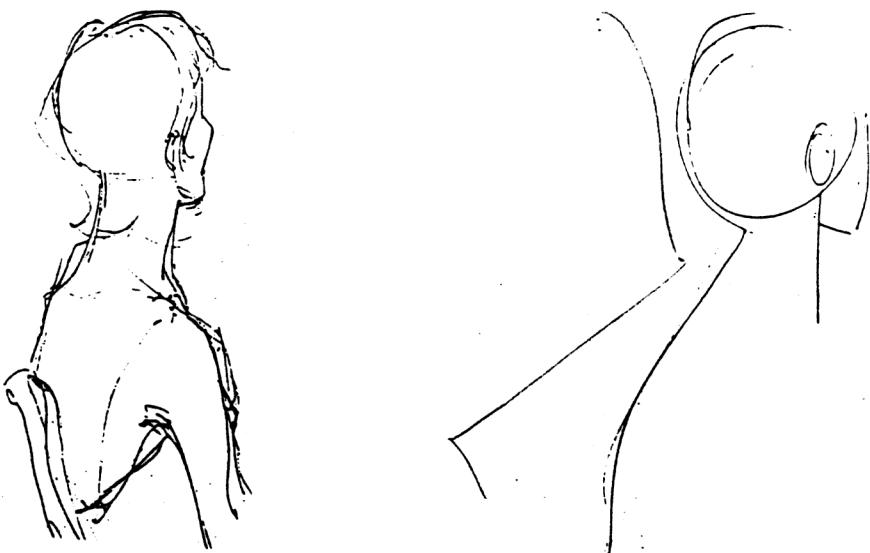


This was beginning to be a nice drawing, but was also becoming a straight up and down thing. The pose had some subtle angles that I tried to point out.

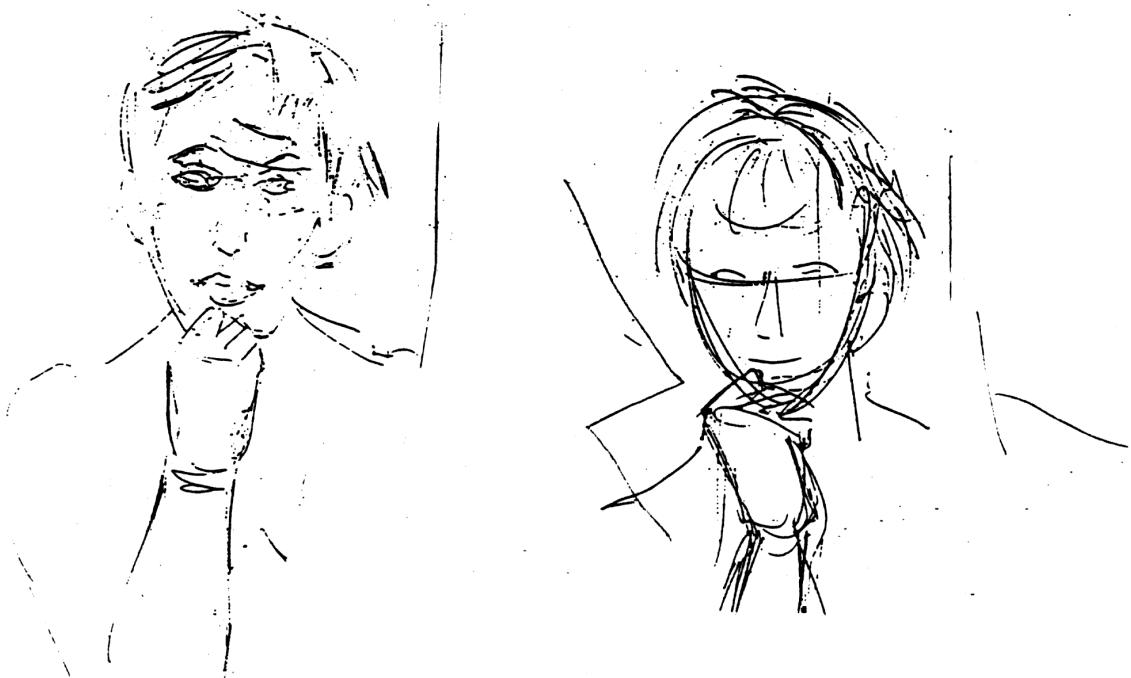


If I had not interrupted this sketch it might have turned out to be a very sensitive drawing. But the whole gesture was overlooked. Note the acute angles the gesture needed to get its story told. Not just the neck angle but the face angle against the neck, the front neck angle against the back, the neck angle against the shoulders. One should never work one angle by itself--it must work against other angles in order to contribute to the overall maximum statement.

## Tennis, Angles, and Essences



This is not a bad drawing--but I felt it missed a very --subtle thing going on in the pose, which a few lines and some definite angles captured.



In this pose I didn't feel the head was leaning on the hand. Through the use of "surface line" I lowered the face so it angled into the fingers to show the weight of the head. The hand and arm became a tangent so I bent the wrist to introduce an angle (which helped to show the weight of the head also) - The trapezius muscles and shoulders became too symmetrical so I offset them with more interesting angles and introduced a neck with its 3rd dimensional "overlap".

### More of the Same

I have been stressing “Essence” drawing and maybe running the word into the ground, but I feel strongly about the word. Anatomy and mechanics are always present too but in the end the essence of each pose must prevail if we want to win the award for best animated scene ('scuse me - scenes).

Lots of things to think about : proportion, anatomy , line, structure, weight, negative space, angles, squash and stretch, perspective, and more, but you can be off in lots of those areas if you have the essence of the pose.

The word essence to me is almost philosophical in meaning: “That in being which underlies all outward manifestations ... “ Applied to drawing it is the motive, mood or emotion as displayed through the gestures of the physical body.

Ideally, of course, there will soon suddenly, that's hopefully, constantly appear in your drawings all of these elements in a satisfying blend. A little study each day spent on one of another of them will net wonderous results. You will be pleased and much prospered when they all start to fit together and the exhausting battle with each separate one is over. We are all at different stages of development so must search out our own weak areas and concentrate on those. I'm not a master in any sense of the word but would relish the opportunity to discuss your class efforts or your studio work in a one on one attempt to analyse your weak and/or strong areas. If I bomb out - so what! If I can hit home with some effective and fruitful suggestions - then let's hear it for the spirit of search and discovery. Anytime is a time to be adventurous if it spurs you on to some worthy goal.

The essence thing appears in all the arts not sketching. In literature it is when the writing goes beyond just words - beyond just reporting. In music it is when it goes beyond just notes and lyrics - when there exists an essence that touches the heart. There are only 26 letters in our alphabet - only a couple hundred words we use in daily communication, but it is the artful way those are juxtaposed that sets them apart as memorable and meaningful. In drawing you have 360 degrees in which to vary your lines and the choice and variance determines whether or not your drawing will be worthy of the effort you've spent on it.

There used to be the belief that certain muses attended the inspirational needs of the artist, nowadays we speak of using the right side of the brain. Certain metaphysical teachings speak of expanded consciousness or awareness...

## Tennis, Angles, and Essences

In Psalm 1 it says the man whose delight is in the law of the Lord ,,, whatever he does prospers. Whatever - it is a shifting of the mental gears from the ordinary to the inspired area of creativity. Here are a few bars of Mozart. How can anything so beautiful be put down so simply. When it's played by a good pianist it sounds like an ethereal orchestra playing God's own Symphony.

### SONATA IN C MAJOR

Köchel 545

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART

**Allegro**  $\text{J} = 120-132$

**FIRST THEME**

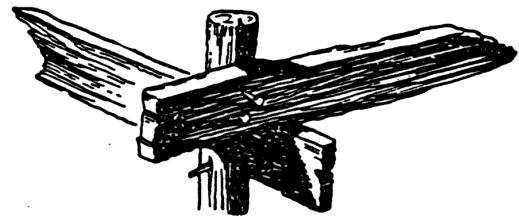
Popular music has its essence passages too - Here's one that came from our own studio (Disney).

Guys like Robert Frost the poet spend their whole lives on the razor thin edge between the ordinary and the inspirational. How thought provoking his “The Road not Taken”.

### THE ROAD NOT TAKEN

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,  
And sorry I could not travel both  
And be one traveler, long I stood  
And looked down one as far as I could  
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Two roads diverged in a wood, and I - I took the  
one less traveled by, And that has made all the  
difference.



The poem goes on for three more stanzas but ends with these three exquisite lines:

Two roads diverged in a wood,  
and I took the one less traveled by,  
And that has made all the difference.

How pithy the first line of his “Mending Wall”. It has the essence of all our feelings about being fenced in.

### MENDING WALL

Something there is that doesn't love a wall,  
That sends the frozen-ground-swell under it,  
And spills the upper boulders in the sun;  
And makes gaps even two can pass abreast.

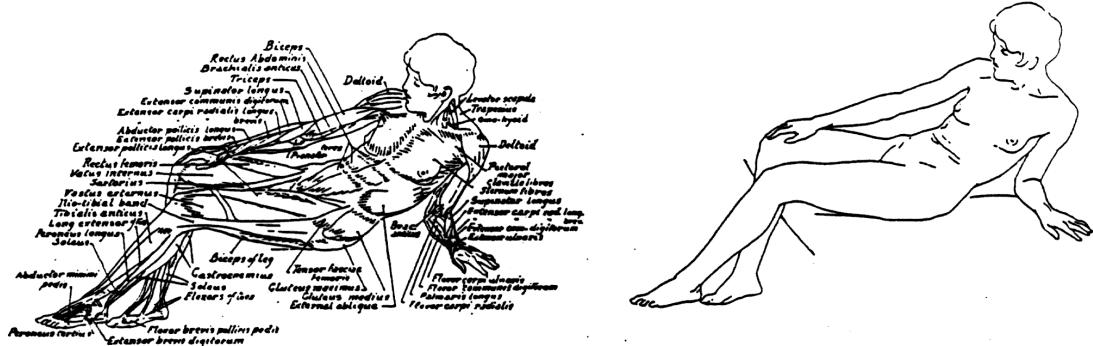
The work of hunters is another thing:

As for drawings and sketches that “Tell All” they are all around us - we recognize them immediately. They imprint their vivid essences on our mental retinas. Fancy talk, Eh. Well this is fancy stuff . You can't just pass over this stuff with a, “Hey Man”, you've got to worship it and make it your religion.

## Tennis, Angles, and Essences

This paper is getting out of hand, but I feel compelled to ... well overkill.

It all starts with preparation, which is the “Open Sesame” of all genius. Even the geniuses admit it’s 99% hard work and 1% genius.



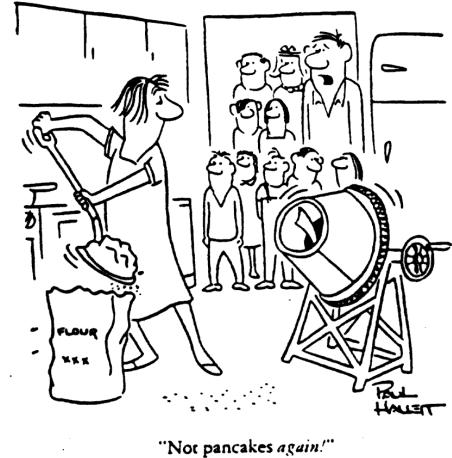
Here are two Forain drawings - A master of simplicity and gesture.



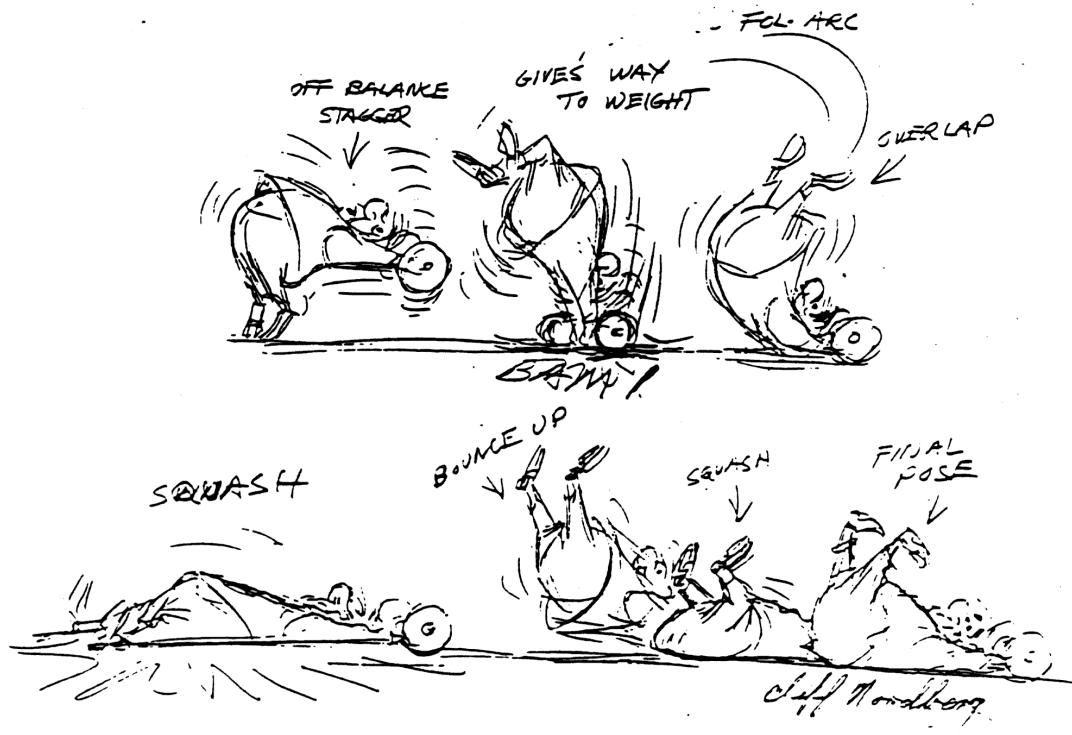
Some simple animal sketches by the artist Rein Poortvliet.

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The cartoonist too has to get at the essence of his subject ----



And in the business so near to our own hearts - animator Cliff Nordberg was a genius at simple, direct action. This is the last part of a weightlifting demonstration.



## Tennis, Angles, and Essences

Ollie Johnston has done some of the most sensitive animation drawings this studio (Disney) has seen. I gave him the title of, "Mr. Essence Man".

